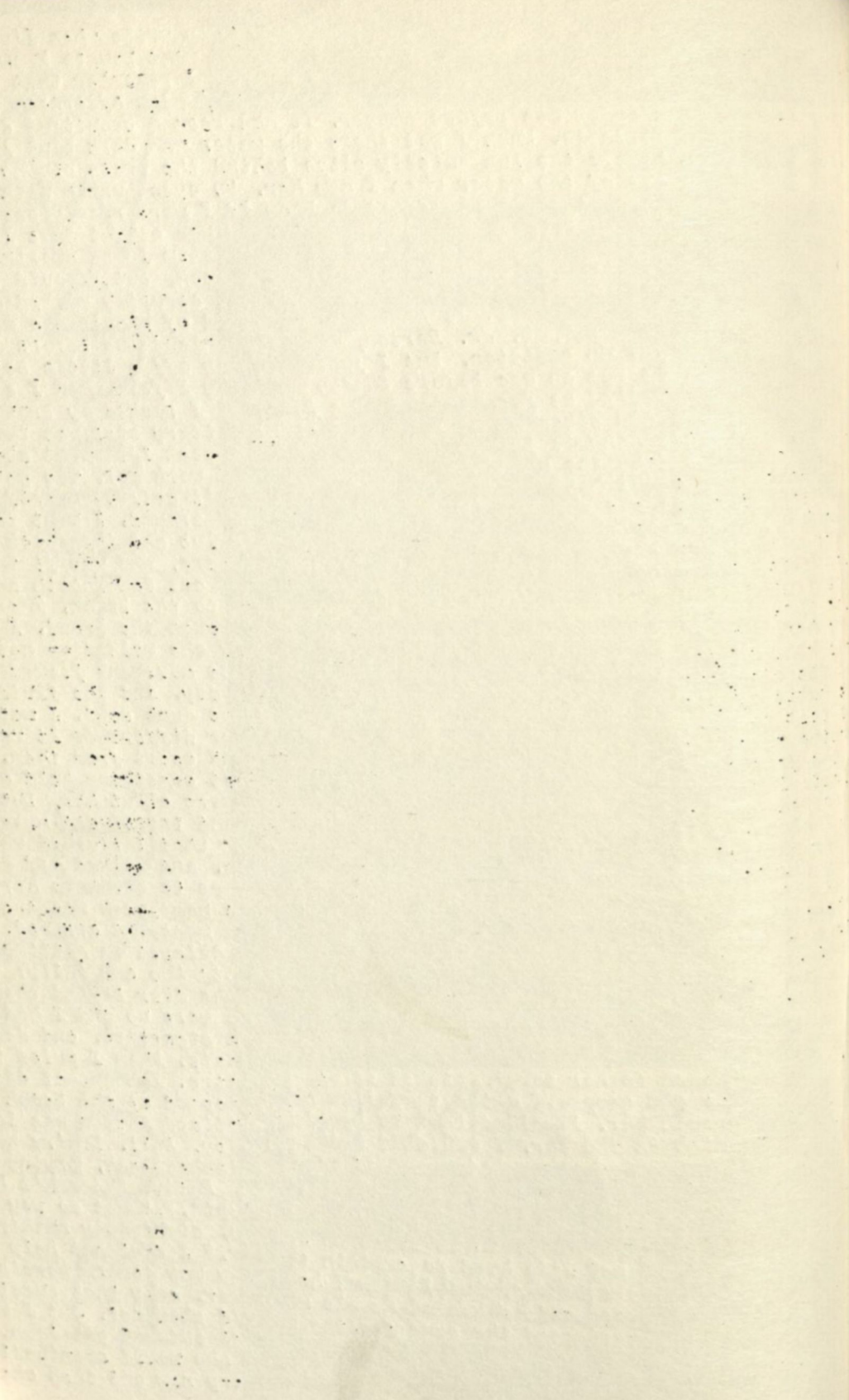


to the beach for a quick dip before supper. It had been a beautiful day, but not uncomfortable. When I got there the water was dark blue like late afternoon before the sun quietly slips behind the trees giving shadows just come out of the water when I saw her. My eyes burned with satisfaction as these things in an effort to know if I were really seeing was almost like I'd knew I was staring at look, but I could tell abruptly walked down of people who were land bus before I c my off a little before y I felt when I saw I racked my brain t tary star was twink week I thought about work for. was getti t't collect myself or around. I went to t club and then back to here, and was fixing I sat down again and to the beach. There rough the crowd. I sa y she walked -- not t he movement flowed pr day, and he fluidly he dumb said. I watch er different. It wasn' od apart from them. I et something held me more about her, but h and introduced myself r that I blushed when e, and walked off dow nce to speak to her, e next week was even e week-end arrived. A delayed in getting d t Mac and Sally: th the door behind them s were up and I had t a cigarette, and deci date. When I puled in nirs. I was that odd topped at the beach h otted that was loc Hey, Bill. You're not lashed back, crying r Biddy. She can't ha upid." "What do you h n, absolutely nuthin. r." I couldn't help my way toward Marcia. ber, only that gueste ld shoulder. But I w el out and sat down.

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THE WESLEYAN

Volume XXIV



No. 4

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Bettie Willson

Each year the Scribes choose a theme for their issue, and for this year we have chosen for our theme "The Things That Are More Excellent" as expressed in the following quotation from the poem by William Watson:

"The grace of friendship, mind and heart,
 Linked with its fellow heart and mind,
 The gains of science, gifts of art,
 A sense of oneness with our kind,
 The thirst to know and understand,
 A large and liberal discontent,
 These are the things in life's rich hand,
 The things that are more excellent."

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Billy

By MARIAN BARFIELD

The rickety old kitchen chair stood under a large tree in the schoolyard. One leg was broken off, making it lean at a tipsy angle. The paint was chipped and scarred; many feet had scraped the crossrail free of any paint at all.

At the sight of that chair I was no longer a middle-aged housewife going to pick up my youngest child from school. I was a child again myself, playing noisily on just such a playground as this. My hair ribbon was coming untied, and I was eight years old. And under the large tree outside the library window, sitting in an old kitchen chair, was Billy.

I do not remember the first time I saw him, or how old he was, or much about his family. He was just there; he might have been there forever. Children do not ask questions of those whom they love. They do not pry, and demand references. They just accept, and we all loved Billy.

His appearance was hardly prepossessing. Stooped and grey, he always wore the same out-at-the-elbows sweater, and battered baseball cap. Bits of various-colored string held his shoes together, and he carried a broken broomstick for a cane. He was by far the blackest colored man I have ever seen.

Billy had a daughter and a grandson, who was in my class at school, but both were too involved with their own lives to pay much attention to the old man. He used to walk through the streets of our town looking for someone to talk to, someone who would be friendly to him. His best friends were the children he met. Children automatically adored Billy, and

the very small ones would crawl up in his lap to pat his wrinkled face with their soft hands.

One day Billy appeared at our school playground at recess time, dragging a battered kitchen chair behind him with difficulty. He pulled it through the yelling, running mass of children to a spot beneath a large tree outside the library window. Here he placed the chair, after planting a convenient rock under its broken leg. Then, with much groaning and puffing, Billy sat down.

We were curious. What, we asked each other, was that old colored man doing here? Soon there was a ring of wide-eyed children standing around Billy's chair. We looked at him, and he looked calmly back. Finally one small boy of about six spoke.

"Wh're you?"

"Ah'm Billy. Who you?"

"Johnny Marshall."

"How d'you do, Johnny Marshall."

There was a moment of embarrassed silence. Then Johnny blurted out, "C'n you play games?"

Billy chuckled, "Caint play no running around games," he said. "But Ah might cud play a quiet like game, if you got one?"

"I See a Color," suggested someone.

For the next few minutes we played a hilarious game of "I See a Color." We went all the way around the circle, until it was Johnny Marshall's turn.

"I see the color black!" he shouted.

"Your shoes?" suggested someone.

"No," said Johnny.

"The school roof?"

"No."

"That fence over there?"

"No."

"The basketball net?"

"No. You're not even warm! Do you give up?"

We did, and Johnny laughed.

"You never would get it! Something black is Billy!"

We sat quiet for a minute, not knowing quite what to do. Should we laugh, or would that hurt Billy's feelings?

Then Billy began chuckling.

"Yo right, Johnny Marshall, yo right. Somefin black sho is Billy. Allus has been, an' allus will be."

We relaxed then, and laughed with Billy. From that day on, Billy became a permanent fixture at the playground. Every morning, just as the bell was ringing for the first recess, he hobbled his way up the street and across the playground to his chair, which remained under the tree.

Billy's duties were many and varied. He umpired baseball games, tied

untied sashes and hair ribbons, refereed fights, and comforted small children when they fell down or hurt themselves in some way. He kept a watchful eye on "his chillun," and when one of them was hurt or sick no parent could have been more worried or kind.

Billy also did doctoring, of a sort. The see-saws and slides on the playground were wooden, and old. Every day someone got a splinter in some portion of his anatomy, and we soon learned that Billy could get a splinter out with a minimum of pain. He used an old well-worn penknife for this operation, which would probably have given the school nurse a spasm if she could have seen it.

"Now dis heah splinter is long an' fat, Honey. Goin' to hurt a lil bit."

"Will it hurt for very long, Billy?"

"Shoo no! We jes scroonches up de finger a mite, an' plies de penknife, an' zoom. No mo splinter! Now, what you gotto do, Honey, is scoot up deah to de nurse offis, and git some alkeehal on dis heah finger. Don't want no germs gittin in deah!"

All these things Billy could do better than anybody, but the most wonderful thing about him was that he rolled cigarettes. Very few of us children had ever seen anything but factory-made cigarettes, and we considered this feat the most amazing thing in the world.

Billy smoked only one cigarette a day, and the ritual of its construction was witnessed by an admiring group of between five and twenty children. He accompanied his demonstration with a lecture on the art.

"Fust of all," he would say, his wrinkled face screwed up with concentration, "You got to git egg-xactly the right lot ob terbaccy on de paper."

He held the thin parchment in his right hand, and deftly sprinkled tobacco onto it.

"Nex thing is, kinda git the terbaccy on one end of de paper, so's you kin roll it good."

With a flicking motion, he did this, while we looked on with wide-eyed wonder.

"Den, you jes rolls it up. Simple as dat!"

With a rolling motion, he transformed the paper and tobacco into a round smooth cigarette. A quick flash of his tongue finished the job, and then began the search for a match.

How we all longed to be able to roll our own! We practiced for hours with tissue and paper and crumbled leaves, but to no avail. All we could ever produce was torn paper and a floor littered with leaves. So every day we watched the demonstration carefully, thinking that maybe we had missed some vital step.

The happiest hours of the day became recess time, just because Billy was there. We felt that we loved him better than we loved our own parents, and why should we not? He understood us! He played with us as much as we wanted him to, while our parents were usually too busy to be bothered. He hardly ever scolded or fussed at us, and if he did it was in

so kindly and gentle a way that we hardly realized we were being scolded.

As the weather turned cooler, we began to worry about Billy. He never wore anything except that raggedy old sweater, and his grandson told us that he had no overcoat. What would he do when it started snowing? He would freeze to death!

Finally we decided to take up a collection among the children to buy Billy an overcoat. We became very excited, and made sly references to "a surprise" in front of Billy, which he of course did not understand. We decided not to tell our teachers or parents about the overcoat. Grown-ups were pretty funny anyway, and they might not let us do it for some reason.

For the next few weeks we collected nickels, dimes, and pennies, which were usually spent at the little candy store across the street. I was made custodian of the money, and I carried it about with me at all times, secure in an old tobacco can. I chose a tobacco can because it made such a good jingly noise when I walked.

One day, a few days before Thanksgiving, several of my friends were brought to school by their mothers, who then went into the principal's office. They stayed there for over an hour, and finally left, shortly before recess.

During recess, Billy's cigarette lecture was interrupted by the principal's secretary.

"Billy," she said, "The principal would like to see you for a few minutes."

"Well, fo de Lawd sake," he murmured. "What you s'pose dat man want wif me?"

He got slowly to his feet, and followed the secretary the school.

"Don't none of you chillun git in eny trouble while Ah'm gone," he called back to us.

"We won't, Billy," we laughed. "We'll be good!"

Billy stayed in the principal's office a long time, and when he came out recess was almost over. He came slowly out of the door, and hobbled down the sidewalk. He looked older somehow, more stooped and small. We waited for him to come back to his chair, but he didn't. He kept on walking down the sidewalk, toward the street. I ran up to him.

"Billy," I shouted. "You don't have to leave yet. Recess won't be over for a few minutes. Come back and finish the . . ."

I didn't finish my sentence. Tears were pouring down Billy's face, running down the seams and creases of his kind black face. They were dropping on his raggedy old sweater, making large dark spots.

"Billy," I whispered, "What's wrong?"

He tried to compose himself. He wiped his sleeve across his eyes and smiled down at me, the saddest, kindest smile I have ever seen.

"Ah got to go, Honey," he said in a quavery voice. "Ah . . . Ah got some bisness to tend to. I cain't come back heah no mo."

He brushed by me, as fast as his wobbly legs would take him, and shuffled down the sidewalk.

"No mo," I heard him whisper brokenly. "Never no mo."

We were horrified. Billy was crying, and he said he couldn't come back to play with us! What had happened?

I asked my teacher. Why, I wanted to know. Why did Billy have to leave? Why was Billy crying? He had always told us that the best people were the bravest people, and brave people never cried! Why?

My teacher looked sad. "It is a hard thing for you to understand, Dear," she said slowly, "But some of the parents objected to Billy playing with you children. You see, Billy is an old man, and old people are liable to be careless of their dress and their language, and . . ." She faltered to a stop, and would not meet my inquiring eyes.

"Well, anyway," she said, almost angrily, "They felt that Billy might be a bad influence on you."

"He is not a bad influence!" I cried. "He's better than anybody! Billy's better than anybody in the whole world! I hate those people that made him leave. I hate them!"

I was sobbing now, and refused to go back to class. My teacher called my mother, and I was sent home for the rest of the day.

My mother wanted to know what was wrong with me, why I was so unhappy, but I wouldn't tell her. Suddenly I hated all grown-ups. They were all mean and cruel, and I hated them. The only thing they did was ruin everything, and I wished they were all dead, even my mother.

The next day was awful. Nobory had any fun at recess; we just stood around in unhappy clumps and looked at the empty chair under the tree.

Suddenly I remembered the overcoat money, still in the tobacco can in my pocket. Then I had a wonderful idea.

"Listen," I said excitedly to my friends. "I still have all the overcoat money! We can give Billy his surprise, and maybe it will make him feel better about not coming back!"

"My gosh," said one of my friends. "We had forgotten all about it. We ought to have plenty of money to buy an overcoat by now! How much is there?"

I pulled the tobacco can out of my pocket, and we carefully counted the accumulated money. We put all the nickels in one pile, the dimes in another, and the pennies in a third. There was even one quarter. It came to four dollars and seventy-three cents.

"Gee," I breathed, "There sure is a lot! We can really get Billy a swell overcoat with all this money! We can go to see Sam this afternoon."

Sam Schwartz was the local tailor, and I felt very proud because I was the only one in the group who knew him. My mother had gone to high school with Sam, and he had done some work for my father.

That afternoon, after school, five of us went to Sam's small tailor shop,

I clutching the tobacco can tightly in my pocket. We entered the dark warm place, and stood for a minute breathing deeply of the steamy-cloth tailor smell. Then Sam came in from the back room.

"Well, Marian and company," he said smiling. "What can I do for such a distinguished group?"

"We want to buy an overcoat, Sam," I said grandly. "It has to be a very warm one. It's for Billy, and it's a surprise."

Sam nodded wisely, his eyes twinkling behind their thick glasses.

"Oh ho! An overcoat for Billy, eh? Well, now! And how much are you prepared to spend for this nice warm surprise overcoat?"

I drew the tobacco can out of my pocket, and put it on the counter in front of Sam.

"There is \$4.73 in here. Is that enough for a good overcoat?"

Sam choked slightly, and hid his face for a moment in a huge red silk handkerchief. When he brought the handkerchief down from his face, he was perfectly serious.

"Is that enough for a good overcoat, she asks me!" He threw up his pudgy hands, then leaned over the counter and looked at me piercingly.

"For \$4.73 I can get you the warmest surprisingest overcoat in the whole of the town. But . . ." He raised his hand warningly. "It is possible that it may be slightly second hand. Is that okay?"

"Well," I said doubtfully, "A brand new one would be nicer. Are you sure it will be a real nice second hand one?"

"More positive I could not be," intoned Sam, raising his right hand, and rolling his eyes to the ceiling.

"I guess it will be okay then," I said. "When can we get it?"

"Today is Wednesday," said Sam, glancing at his calendar. "It is possible that I will have to do a bit of looking around for this magnificent \$4.73 overcoat. How about next Monday?"

"That will be okay," I said. "Thanks an awful lot, Sam. And don't you tell anyone about this. It's got to be a surprise."

"I should be killed on the spot if I breathe a word!" he said solemnly. "Goodbye, Dolink."

Monday afternoon after school, we picked up the overcoat and started for Billy's house, I carrying the large box proudly before me. Billy was all alone in the small house. As we filed silently onto the porch we could see him sitting inside in front of the fire.

We knocked timidly. Billy started slightly and said, "Come on in. Jes me heah."

We went in and lined up before his chair. Suddenly the box I was holding weighed a million tons, and I was very shy and afraid.

"Hello, Billy," said one of my friends. "We came to see you, just like we promised."

"Well now," said Billy, blinking rapidly several times. "Dis sho is a sur-prise. Y'all set down. Heah, Honey, you put dat big box somewheah

out ob you way."

I thrust it at him. "It's for you, Billy. We brought it for you. It's a present from all of us."

I was breathing rapidly, and my face was flushed a brilliant scarlet.

"Fo' me?" said Billy, taking the box from me and placing it on his lap. "Well, now! Ain't dat somepin! Les see now."

He began slowly unknitting the string with his gnarled fingers. It seemed to take forever, but finally the string was off and the box opened. There lay the wonderful four dollar and seventy-three cent overcoat. I was shamed. It looked shabby and old, despite the cleaning and pressing that Sam had done. It wasn't nearly good enough for Billy.

"What dis?" he said, taking the overcoat out of the box and holding it up. "A coat! A good wahm coat."

He looked at us standing before him in an uneasy semi-circle. Then he put the box on the floor, and holding the coat, painfully stood up. He bowed slightly to us, and the tears were starting in his eyes.

"I thank you," he said formally. "Dis de bes present Billy ever hab give to him."

We left soon after that. Before, we had talked to Billy all the time; now there seemed nothing to say. We were uncomfortable, and so was he. It was not the same as it had been. It was different.

We made many plans during the year to visit Billy again, but somehow we never got around to it. We saw him, though. He began roaming the streets as before, looking for someone to talk to. Wearing his overcoat, he walked and walked, unconscious of snow and rain.

Then he stopped talking to people at all, and just hobbled along, his head hung down and his shoulders stooped, mumbling to himself.

Shortly after Christmas there was a heavy snow in which Billy walked all one day. He was taken home by a policeman, and was sick in bed for over a month. After he was well again he stayed in the house and ceased his roaming for the rest of the winter.

Then suddenly the winter was over. The dead-seeming trees began to put forth tiny shoots of green, and snowsuits and galoshes gave way to lighter clothing. Those were bad days for going to school. No one wanted to be cooped up in a musty chalk-filled room, when outside the birds were singing and everything smelled clean and fresh.

And with the sun and the birds came Billy. He emerged once again from his little house, and began walking the streets. He spent most of his time in the park, watching the children play. He never spoke to them as he once had; he just watched. He looked years older now. His hair was pure white, and he could hardly hobble along with his broken broom-stick cane.

Sometimes on his way home he passed the playground. We called to him at first, but he didn't hear us, or pretended not to. He kept right on

going, his stick tick-tacking on the sidewalk, and his shoulders hunched almost to his ears.

One day as Billy was passing the school, a group of the small children were playing ball near the sidewalk. Suddenly the ball bounced into the street, and like a flash, one of the children darted after it, right in front of Billy. He looked up sharply, dropped his stick and went after her, (as fast as his tired old legs could carry him.)

There were sudden screams and the terrifying squeal of auto brakes. Then there was the child, crying but unhurt in the street, and Billy, crumpled and lifeless under the wheels of the car.

I do not remember the rest of that day. Everywhere I went I saw Billy lying, dead, in the street. I saw his small withered old body curled grotesquely in death, and my eyes became clouded with terror and sorrow. When I went to bed that night, I lay awake for hours, stiff with nameless fear. Then the tears came, and I sobbed until my throat was thick with pain. Finally I slept.

When I went back to school everything seemed the same. The younger children played as noisily and happily as before, not seeming to realize that anything had happened. But somewhere, someone had found the chair that Billy had once sat in, and put it back in its place, even putting the rock under the broken leg.

During recess my friends and I stood in a silent miserable group, not joining in the play of the others. All around us were the sounds of children's laughter, but we were quiet. We could not take our eyes from the rickety old kitchen chair that stood empty under the tree outside the library window.

Evening Thoughts

BY ARLINE ATKINS

*Sunset through the trees illumines gathering shadows;
Chattering sparrows flurry about in their preparation for rest;
A wisp of pink cloud fades into pearl grey*

Foreshadowing the close of day,

And coolness descends.

Crickets hum a cheerful sound and frogs begin their chorus;

Peace and tranquility become tangible:

I think of home.

I Have Looked at Greatness

BY JOAN M. SHAPIRO

*I have looked at greatness.
I have seen it in a mobile mouth
And warm and understanding eyes.
An inner light one dare not try describing
A steady mind behind a tender smile.
A mind that reaches far and gleams
The harvest of as great and greater minds
And need not bow before them nor be humble,
But meets them on a plane—removed, refined.
A light that comes from inner comprehension,
A spirit that defies this novice pen,
Eyes that see one and beyond one's being
Into a realm where few can ever stray,
A mouth, whose words may be both serious and laughing
Whose words may be compassionate or gay.*

Time

BY JANE HOWARD

"Time doth run with calm and silent feet."

Time . . .

Passes on at a steady pace . . .

Minutes . . .

Hours . . .

Days . . .

Years . . .

But I am oblivious . . .

Of its passing . . .

I go on in the world of the present . . .

Not caring about the future . . .

Unaware of the past . . .

The clock on the wall . . .

Goes in circles . . .

But I move in a straight line . . .

Towards tomorrow . . .

Passing Fancies

PONT RILEY

"It's just a passing fancy. He'll be over it soon." Daddy had just built his first boat, and Mama certain that it would sink on its maiden voyage, was explaining to the neighbors Daddy's sudden passion for boats. That was twelve years ago, and the fancy has not passed from boats to a new hobby, but from little boats to big boats to outboard motors to making fishing nets. Not only that, but Daddy has succeeded in reducing the pleasant pastime of fishing into a cool and calculating science; as well as in arousing his family's interest in his "useful and economic" hobby.

Yes, it all started twelve years ago. Daddy has always enjoyed building on a small scale, so when someone suggested that he build a boat, Daddy thought it was an excellent idea. For days he studied plans and blueprints, and finally chose the plan of his "dream boat." It was a sixteen foot little rowboat with sleek lines. Daddy spent weeks working on it, and finally the time came to paint it. "Now listen," he said, "I want each of you to suggest a color for our first boat. It must be a color that won't show up the scratches and that won't be hard to keep clean. Personally, I think gray would be the ideal color." Mama's visions of a little white boat with "Mary J." painted in red letters went out the window, and one Sunday afternoon the "Gray Goose" was duly christened with all pomp, circumstance, and water in a coke bottle.

The "Gray Goose" which was sold because of its weight and dull color, has had many descendants. Some were too big or too little; some didn't fit on the trailer properly, and others meant getting rid of a particular outboard motor to which Daddy had become attached. The present boat has been with us for about two years, and as far as Daddy is concerned, he'll keep it a while longer. You see, this boat has a fibre-glass bottom.

Daddy has had "Number Thirty" (we ran out of names a long time ago), about three months when he decided to put a fibre-glass bottom on it. "Number Thirty" is built of cedar with a mahogany bow, so it was deemed worthy of having a completely fire-proof, scratch-proof, barnacle-proof, and leak-proof bottom. Fibre-glass, when applied properly, produces formica-like finish which is just the latest thing in boats. Daddy read about this wonder product in a boating manual, so naturally he had to try it right away. He sent for complete instructions and materials, and for days all he could think about was "Number Thirty" with a fibre-glass bottom. Of course we knew when the stuff arrived; we were even invited to attend the application. "There's absolutely nothing to it," Daddy said. "All you have to do is mix the right proportion of two or three different powders with the solution they sent until you get a paste. Then you spread

it on the bottom of the boat, put the fibre-glass on (it looks something like croker sack material), and then spread another mixture on. See how simple it is?" It was simple all right, except for one thing. The stuff was explosive. Daddy was lucky though; his first batch of the mixture just turned to stone before he could apply it. The next batch never even formed a paste. Refusing to be discouraged, Daddy sent for some more stuff and another set of instructions. This time he had better luck with the mixtures, but he became rather worried when he couldn't make the fibre-glass itself be still. If I remember correctly, it took six men to hold it in place while Daddy furiously painted the paste on top of it. No one has ever been more proud than Daddy when "Number Thirty" finally had its new fibre-glass bottom.

It wasn't too long after the "Gray Goose" episode that Daddy became interested in outboard motors, cast nets, and the science of fishing. As Daddy himself said, "If the fish are there, I'm going to get them." This naturally meant the proper equipment—the chief essentials besides the boat being a motor and a net. It is next to impossible to remember just how many makes and size motors Daddy has had. All I know is that *Evinrude* is his favorite brand and that last Christmas he still had a fifteen horsepower motor but was thinking about trading it in on a twenty-five. He also has a little one-horsepower motor which he simply had to have in order to get up the shallow creeks without disturbing the fish. I can row three times as fast as it will go, but like Daddy said, it is an energy saver. This little motor was too small for "Number Thirty". Daddy was forced to make a little flat-bottomed, plywood boat so he could get some use out of the motor.

The final requirement for an experienced fisherman is a cast net. Daddy, who will go fishing any hour of the day or night, simply doesn't have time to wait around for the fish to bite. And since he only goes fishing when he knows the fish are there, he's not going to take any chances on the fish not biting. In other words, if the fish are there and Daddy knows it, it's too bad, little fish! The constant question is, "How does he do it?" The usual answer is, "With a cast net, of course."

A cast net when spread out looks like a huge circular skirt made from net. The usual radius is about seven feet. All around the bottom of the net is a bag with lead weights to hold it down. Several cords running from various places on the rim of the bag up through the center of the net enable the fisherman to haul in practically all of the fish over which the net descends. Not only has Daddy mastered the art of throwing a cast net (the average weight is fifty pounds) so that it opens in a perfect circle, but he also makes them in his spare time. It takes Daddy from three to four months working on the average of an hour a day to make one. That way he has one just about finished by the time one wears out.

Daddy takes great pride in his nets—he loves to tell people all about them. If you are an exceptionally interested spectator, he might even teach

you the stitch. I can hear him now: "It's over, under, through, and pull. You see, each knot is a separate one, and it's tied three times. That way the net is absolutely run-proof." Daddy has made nets out of all sorts of twine—cotton, nylon, and linen. He prefers nylon for strength and durability, but the cotton and linen are easier to work with. Sometimes he dyes the nets a sort of gray-green color, so the fish won't be able to see them as well.

Mama used to accuse Daddy of extravagance each time he made a new boat or bought a new motor. But, as Daddy himself pointed out, it isn't every man who has a hobby that provides groceries. Why we even had to buy a deep freeze to take care of all the "groceries" Daddy caught. Daddy goes fishing every chance he gets, and when he comes home after making a big catch and hollers, "All who want fresh, fried fish cooked by the best chef in town, come and get it," even Mama has to admit that she's glad Daddy's passing fancies didn't pass away.

Symphony

Clarinets wail . . .

Flutes sing . . .

Four silent strings dance for an artist's bow . . .

Stretched drum heads add the rhythm . . .

A collection of wood and metal brought to life by common motions and simple breathing . . .

This is a symphony . . .

A symphony of music.

Hands clasp . . .

Hearts beat rapidly . . .

Two souls grow together in everlasting peace . . .

Love plays the game of words softly spoken in the twilight . . .

This is a symphony . . .

A symphony of love.

Bright sunrise . . .

Majestic sunset . . .

Bees humming a rhythm . . .

The wind sings its melody in the leaves of the spring trees . . .

Reeds of the water add the countermelody . . .

This is a symphony . . .

This is my symphony.

—CLAIRE DORSETT

An Open Door

By BETTIE WILLSON

Time was on their side and he knew it. He lay awake in the night, listening to the ticking of the clock—thinking. The grapevine worked well, carrying messages of hope and courage through his country like a whirlwind, but it was not strong enough. If someone could get help from the outside, before it was too late, his people could be saved. But there was no way. To the west lay Czechoslovakia, and an iron curtain twelve miles thick. The borders, so they said, were patrolled night and day by heavily armed guards, who were trained to shoot—to kill. As for the Balkan Sea—he chuckled bitterly—another armed frontier. No. There was no way.

Four times, over a period of six years, he had applied for a passport. There had been International Law Association meetings which he would have liked to attend, but the passports had been repeatedly refused. Still, he studied at his profession. He studied until he became an authority on international law. It was his only weapon. But, time, the most important factor, was on their side.

He was prepared for the opportunity when it finally arrived. Late in the summer, Foreign Minister Skrzyszewski called him to Warsaw and asked him to accompany the Communist-led Polish delegation to the General Assembly session of the United Nations. For a moment he could not speak. Why did they want him? What did he have to gain by an appointment to the UN? He apologized to the minister and made haste to inform him that he was not a member of the Communist party.

"We know that, doctor," the big man answered. "But you are well acquainted with international law. We believe that you are a progressive thinker and, besides, your duties will include only legal—not political—work."

Still, he distrusted them. The Minister's voice droned on—three months in New York—twenty-one dollars a day—a hotel room—sight-seeing—American goods to buy. They would not take no for an answer. Very well. He would go and, if he could, escape.

The idea was a new and vibrant thing. He still lay awake in the night, but it was not the clock's ticking that he heard now. He made plans—minute details which must be covered to perfection. He could not afford to make a mistake—not now. It was almost too simple. Here was an open door, and all he had to do was walk through it to America—and freedom. Two more months and he would be free.

"So, you are going to America with the delegation, eh Marek?" friends would ask, and he would take a deep breath and nod slowly.

"Could you—well—buy some things for us, do you think?"

And he would write, with deliberate concentration, a list of their requests; a fountain pen, gloves, nylons, silk ties . . . he must be very careful.

He left for Warsaw on the fourth of September, leaving behind the mementos—the keepsakes—the beloved books. He left his checking account intact, and carried only one suitcase and a small leather notebook. They must not suspect. He attended meetings for the entirety of that long week. His body froze at every knock on his hotel door. Every time the telephone split the silence with its ring, his forehead glistened with sweat. *He must not fail.*

On the morning of the tenth of September, while the sun baked the earth of Poland, he flew with the delegation to Paris. It had been long—so—long—since he had known the intoxicating sensation of freedom. For three days, at every spare moment, he left the hotel just to walk the streets and smell the air and feel the newness of it. He had forgotten what it was like. One evening, at dinner, the Foreign Minister turned to him and smiled.

"And where do you plan to leave your family?" he asked. "In Cracow or in Katowice?"

For a moment his heart stopped. Oh, no. Now, they would not let him go to America. He struggled to control the tremor that he knew must be in his voice, and answered.

"But, sir, I am a bachelor. I have no family."

His superior's face paled. Two of the other delegates exchanged glances. He knew, then, that they had bungled. There were no family ties—no one to hold as hostage to insure his return to Poland. Now, they would not let him go. He went back to the hotel, sick at heart. They would not, surely, let him go.

He bought a dozen bananas from a vendor and went up to his room. Sitting before the tiny window, he munched at a piece of the fruit and gazed across the rooftops of the city, and thought very hard. He could do it now, before it was too late. He need simply walk out of the hotel and go to the French Embassy and request political asylum. He started for the door, but he could not leave. His love of freedom was strong, but his love for Poland was stronger. He would save more time and do more good if he could get to America. He would have to take the gamble and wait. He ate all of the bananas and he waited. For two days he waited.

They sent him word that the train for Cherbourg would leave at two-thirty. He caught it and rode in silent fear, for twelve hours, waiting for that touch on the shoulder—that letter—that quiet command, which would mean that he could not go. But, the boat docked and he went aboard unmolested. The voyage was a strain. He played, to perfection, the part of a Communist diplomat and spoke to no one. He walked the decks for hours—thinking—wondering. And then—

New York! A skyline in the night, the sound of water lapping gently against old pilings—America. Now, it was only a matter of time. He went to the hotel, checked in and waited. Late in the evening, he went quietly down the fire escape and found a policeman on the street corner.

"I want political asylum," he told the astonished officer. "Where do I go to get it?"

"I'll call the F. B. I.," the officer said.

It was that simple. And, before a week had passed, his people knew. The people of Poland, listening through earphones to the shortwave broadcasts of The Voice of America, heard of Dr. Marek Korowicz and his simple heroism. Those who heard, passed it on by word of mouth to friends and families, and, in that way, the people knew and were heartened.

Sun Music

Sunlight . . .

a small ray of powdered gold filtering through the dark

A chord . . .

*one sounding, golden chord plucked on the strings of a straining
violin . . .*

on rippling harp and nectar-sweet lyre . . .

sounding, sounding, sounding

*through the echoes of silent, empty halls that scream for
life . . .*

One dreams a dream and waits . . .

*searching every darkened corner by the light of one small
candle,*

finding one length of sunlight and one chord . . .

when suddenly blinding light bursts all around! . . .

light brighter than sun music to the Soul,

filling the outstretched cup . . .

*spilling o'er the brim in crystal waves that gather as an
ocean*

and that spread outward, ever outward to brush the shores.

and music . . . God's music

thundering through the spheres and planes of space,

*making the earth reel and the universe tremble with its
power . . .*

one power . . . one force.

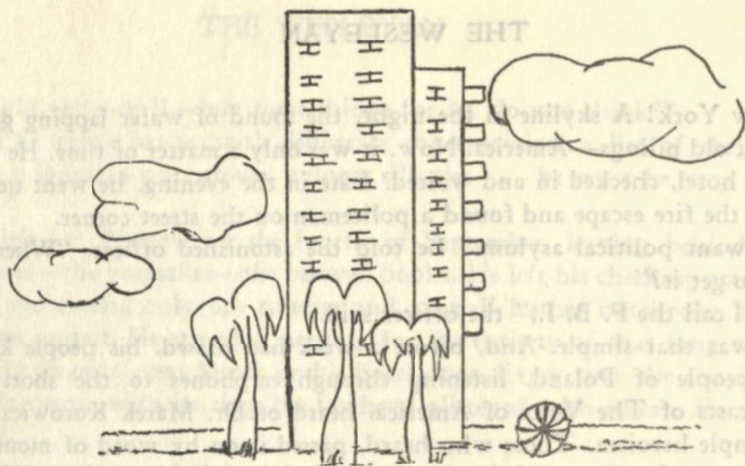
Then . . . one pain . . .

one beautiful finger of golden pain trailing down the Soul,

leaving liquid fire in its wake.

Life moves . . . stretches forth curving arms . . . and lives.

—CHARLYE WIGGINS



Songs of My City

Prelude

This is my city.

Watch her as she lies in tropic sunlight;

A giant who sleeps in the languid heat of midday.

Watch the sparkling waters that lick about her base

Reflecting her portly frame upon its flawless face.

Laugh with the trees and streets and stars whose glee

Is wild abandon of the natural law.

This is my city.

Fair is my city.

The tropic dawn that comes with golden haze

Scorning the rosy tints of northern climes

Strips her of night. With Aphrodite she stands

Born of the ocean spray that purges her shore

And leaves her . . . shining castles in the sand . . .

Like some lost fairy city bathed in dew.

This is my city.

Tall is my city.

Her head is high and her silhouette is pride etched on the night.

A great stone jungle carved of rock by man himself,

She stands, and forbids him entrance to her heart.

Nowhere is man more lonely;

Nowhere comes closer to belonging

Than is her alleys where soul seeks soul

And finds peace in her might.

This is my city.

She is alive.

Her heartbeat is the pounding surf;

The penetrating heat of molten rays

That cast weird patterns on her laughing streets.

The surging crowds, they are her voice, her tears.

The rumbling cars sing songs.

That are alone the city's song . . .

This is my city.

* * *

Song of the Surf

"What does it mean to die?"

The small child asked,

Standing before her mother in the sand.

Her cheeks were rosy from the gleaming sun,

And wisps of fine hair blew

About her face.

The mother lay still in the sunlight.

The sky above arched to infinity

And the waves sparkled,

Their undergarments peeping as they danced.

The voices murmured with the whispering palms

And all was peace

In the summer sun.

The wind blew free, unhindered by the gently sloping dunes,

But on the hill the marsh grass flung back the plaintive cry

That she had proved a snare.

The endless beach.

The pounding surf.

The creeping things.

And a small child asking,

"What does it mean to die?"

The mother opened her eyes and stretched forth her hand for

The graceful shell

The child held out to her.

The shell whose walls had been a creature's home.

A creature who had lived . . . and breathed . . . and preened itself

Upon the ocean floor.

And like a soul, had left behind a hollow shell.

"What does it mean to die?"

"To die is to fully live,"

Her mother said at last,

Shading her eyes against the noonday glare.

"To drop behind the bad, the want, the need . . .

Like shells along the beach."

She smiled and slid her arm around the childish waist.

"Then dying isn't bad?"

The mother pushed the dampened curls

Away from the baby eyes.

Large grey eyes that questioned.

"No," she said,

"Dying is being born to another world."

"And does it hurt?"

"I think not," was the answer.

"Rather it is like sleeping in the sun,

Feeling its warm rays;

Listening to the waves.

And feeling very small and very big.

Small enough to slip beneath the sands,

And big enough to embrace the endless skies."

But the childish back was turned.

With deep intent she labored now

Upon some castle spire

Reaching ever higher in the air.

* * *

Song of the City Streets

This is the city street.

A shadow winding through a maze of lights.

That passes shops and tenements and sings to each

The self-same song . . .

A song of hope.

*He holds her close
And she is unaware
Of the squalid figure lounged against the doorway
Who watches her slim hips, her graceful limbs.
And grins with yellowed lips.
Grins and nods across the way,
And two pair of eyes follow her lovely form.*

*He is aware.
He is aware, and his arms about her waist are bands of steel.
His glance meets theirs in sharp defiance.*

*And lowering his glance, the figure saunters to the curb
And spits into the gutter.
A girl in a too tight skirt and rings of gold upon her ears
Smiles knowingly.
And her high-pitched laughter fills
The city street.*

*The smell of spices floods the air
Borne by the fitful winds that blows dirty scraps of paper
Against their feet.
A voice pierces the night.
And a woman, her body great with child, leans from the window
High above
And babbles in a foreign tongue.*

*And in the dusk below
The half-clad children in the streets make answer
In the tongue
And turn to stare.*

*And she is too aware
And lifts her eyes to his.
And in that moment a home becomes for them more than reality.
Not the children in the dusky streets
Or the crowded room where sweat and garlic blend.
But where their hands are clasped across a table.
Where their hearts are one beside an altar.
She leans her head against him
And his arm is close about her shoulders.*

*This is the city street.
A shadow winding through a maze of lights.
That passes shops and tenements and sings to each
The self-same song . . .
A song of hope.*

* * *

A Winter Song

*Winter comes to my city.
Not with ice and snow or bitter gales
But softly, with a gentleness that summer does not know.
Her winds are as a balm to troubled hearts,
And sojourners from half a world away
Seek solace on her shores.
Her doors are open.
In her streets a winter song is heard.
A song of welcome.*

*"Come to my sands"
The pictures call
"Where all is one rampant holiday, and man is cold.
Where even Cain may find a sanction
For his deed."*

*"Come to my shores"
The posters shout,
And gaudy paintings of her lavish spires
Beckon man to Fortune's wheel
And Chance.*

*This is man's song.
This is his refuge; this his theme—
That glasses lifted high in revelry
And laughter reaching to the
Spangled skies
Alone can lift the longing of the heart.
That shops which lie a gaudy bracelet
On the shore
Alone can fill the aching of a soul.*

*"Come to my shores,"
The city sings,
"For here is peace.
Stand on my shore where palms
Lift up their humble prayers;*

*Where wavelets labor at their Sisyphean tasks
With contentment and with
Happiness."*

"Come to my sands,"

The city sings,

"Where man may stand alone.

Not lonely, but alone.

Yet not alone, for in my streets

Find oneness."

This is the city's song.

In her heart is welcome.

Above the clamor of the ways of men

She whispers peace

Beyond the glitter of his pagan pyre

She owns the glow of moon and stars

Reflected in the deep.

Beside the lushness of man's paradise,

Her towers reaching upward,

Point to God.

ANN GODWIN

The Sights and Sounds of Wesleyan

BY THE SENIOR SCRIBES

Kipling said it, I suppose, in Barrack Room Ballads. You know the poem about Tommy. He was a soldier and nobody really cared what happened to him—until a war came along. Funny how we don't realize how important something is until we need it, or until we are about to lose it.

That's the problem, you know. We can't admit we love it here, 'cause we're about to move on. We're supposed to be anxious to "try our wings", to conquer the world that's "our oyster." Yet we will leave a part of us behind. And in return we will take with us the sights and sounds of Wesleyan.

The fountain playing in the courtyard and the sunlight on the lake . . . Those bright blue autumn skies that looked even bluer from the bottom of the loggia . . . Lake Wesleyan, the one that formed in the middle of front campus during the rainy season . . . Rubber boots and raincoats . . . The first time it snowed, when we were freshmen . . . Spring, and the campus done in gay pastels.

The trunks lining the halls in the dorms . . . and the showers that were temperamental, to say the least . . . The study parlors during stunt . . . The birthday parties and the long talks about almost anything.

The quiet of the library and the noise of the pharm . . . The new building that rose behind our soccer field . . . The cabin in the woods and the view from the sundeck . . . Or looking toward the dorms from the other side of the lake.

And the time we heard the high-school freshmen sing our song and we knew that, in the vernacular, we'd had it! And still there was one more Spring with its memories to be stored, its friendships to be deepened, one more Spring in which to cherish and enjoy the sights and sounds of Wesleyan.

Sounds of Silence

BY JANE HOWARD

A water fall tumbling down,

Down the side of the cliff,

Into a deep dark pool,

Into quiet waters

A sound of silence.

Insects scurrying along the ground,

Along the ground looking for prey,

Under the rocks,

In cool crevices,

Sounds in silence.

The breeze blows through the lacelike fern,

Through the fern with a soft murmur,

Through the fern,

And back again,

A sound in silence.

Jon

With a sigh I slammed shut the biology book and glanced around my room which was tucked into the southeast corner of the Freshman dorm.

Strange, I thought, it takes such a short time to feel at home where one's interests lie. That's true of the mountains and—

As always my eyes were drawn against my will to the picture on the desk. Jon—Jon McClure. Even his name unuttered has a magnetic effect on my thoughts. My mind wandered back as it has so many times to the summer we met.

My story book summer home in the Smoky Mountains is rustic and simple yet a dream for unlucky multitudes that must stay in the heat of the cities. It is confusingly called Camp Fountain, a pleasing name but it's not really a camp at all. It's my aunt and uncle's vacation home nestled among the hills in a miniature cove.

The main room of the massive lodge has a huge stone fireplace at one end and homemade ping pong table at the other. From the moment you enter you can feel the room itself reflect the heart glow of those it shelters.

Wonderful people they are. Aunt Doll—Doll, that's what my uncle calls her. She is like a doll with snowy white hair, blue eyes, and a complexion that any beauty queen would envy and, oh, is he proud of her! Uncle Doc, I mean. He's not a doctor. In fact he was a minister, retired now. No one ever has to ask his occupation. His saintly countenance gives him away.

Both of them were fond of Jon right from the beginning. It was summer before last when he stepped into our lives. I remember every moment of the night we met.

Although I had been to many square dances, I still felt strangely out of place. When the tall dark-haired boy put me at ease in the dance with his winning smile, he also won my heart. That amazing grin of his could charm demons or angels as well as human beings!

Properly, we had been introduced by a mutual friend. He had repeated my name, "Janet Trammel" and said, "I like Jan. Okay to call you Jan?"

"Okay," I agreed, watching for the grin I knew would come.

We talked about everything from crop rotation to my Florida home town dating customs. What we said didn't matter nearly so much as the fact that we were talking and laughing together.

Later, just before I fell asleep, I reviewed the wonderful evening and in my mind pictured Jon's dark, well shaped head. It struck me that he would be a great man someday. Sleepily I smiled, just a silly feeling.

It was heaven on earth to be sixteen and in love. We laughed a lot that summer and sparks of joy fairly flew from us. They must have, for those we were with were happy too. People turned to stare at us together. I thought then it was because Jon was so good-looking but I suppose we did make a striking combination—dark and blond, both of us tall and looking as though we drank three glasses of milk per day and walked a mile every morning before breakfast.

We did walk—over hills with wild flower covered pastures, pine woods full of laurel, and once up on a mountain peak. Here in a meadow I eagerly gathered some Queen Anne's Lace which grew in profusion.

I marvelled, "Back home we have to grow these in gardens or buy them at a florist shop!"

He laughed and shook his head, "Here, they are full of chiggers. Throw 'em away."

Chiggers, I learned, are what I'd been taught to call red bugs.

Up on the summit the air is sweet and pure and the spring water is cool and delicious. Jon would add, "And the poison ivy growing everywhere!"

Poor boy, he had a terrible case afterward but even that didn't dampen our spirits. We went canoeing on the lake and sometimes swimming. However, the fewer times we swam, the better Jon liked it for he couldn't swim a stroke and I was "raised in the water."

"Can't stand to be beaten, especially by a female," Jon grinned.

Nothing that summer could have convinced me ours was just a summer romance.

Ha! I thought as I glanced at my watch and struggled up from the bed, I bet a lot of nuts have thought the same thing only to discover they were sadly mistaken.

I sat down at the tiny dressing table and began brushing my hair. It was almost time for supper.

If only my roommate were here perhaps I'd stop thinking. She thinks I'm an "Elaine the Lily Maid, pining away for a mere man." Jo is a profound manhater and tennis fiend but she's a dear who peps me up when I sink into one of my black moods.

"How you acquired an artistic temperament but no talent beats me!" she scolds with mock exasperation.

But Jo isn't here—only Jon's picture and my stubborn memories. They come no matter how hard I fight them.

Last summer—so different from the year before. A chill passes over me. That awful change almost immediately after the first evening.

When we arrived Jon was there to meet us. With pounding heart I practically ran from the car to the steps into Aunt Doll's arms. But I was looking on past to him, standing on the porch at the head of the stairs with both hands outstretched and the old familiar grin on his face. Not trusting myself to speak, I took his hands and just looked at him.

Later we slipped away from the others. He kissed me and said, "I've waited a long time for that."

Dazed from the kiss, I whispered, "I'd forgotten you were so tall!"

He laughed, "What a heck of a thing to say!"

Then slowly I noticed the change in him. Something had embittered him. He was no longer sweet and fun-loving. He didn't seem to trust people and that started us to fussing.

One day while helping me pick wild strawberries, Jon remarked, "When you stop to think that we're born into this world with no worries and no money and leave this world with no worries and no money, it makes a fella wonder why he spends the greater part of his life worrying and trying to get money. What's the use?"

Shocked to dumbness I watched the berry that had fallen from my fingers roll down the hill.

I thought wildly, why, that doesn't sound like you, Jon. You love life—people, laughter, music, nature. You've never cared about money and you've never been bitter like this.

There were other times just as bad. Nothing encouraged him.

In order to be able to go to college in the fall he had to work—long hours, too. That meant, of course, that we were seldom together. I should have understood but, spoiled by the summer before, I didn't.

The inevitable happened. We quarreled and stopped seeing each other. But I can't forget. The quarrel seemed so important then—so insignificant now.

I remember the night we left the mountains last summer. The silence was broken by the singing of a thousand "chatteredads" (the name the locals have for the katydid) and the wierd cry of an old screech owl. I lay awake in the small cabin that had been my summer bedroom. It was perched on the hillside away from the other cabins and the lodge in the clearing.

Some people had asked, "Aren't you afraid to stay alone at night up here?"

No, I wasn't afraid. I loved it. Its peaceful seclusion was perfect for those times I had cried.

But that night I didn't cry. There was only a numb feeling. That feeling of not wanting to face reality because it hurts so.

I believe it was harder to leave this last summer than ever before. Always before there had been old friends to return to and a new and more important classification in school each year. Now we have graduated, my friends scattered, and I was going home only to leave again for a strange new world—college. Then to make matters worse, I had lost Jon.

A voice inside me mocks, why don't you forget about him. You have no lack of dates here and you like all of them. Maybe some day you will marry one of them. Wise up, Jan, this one-and-only business is out of date.

It doesn't have to be, I retort angrily to myself. I could disprove that theory.

I can't help but feel that he thinks of me too. Those infrequent letters—so brief and starchy—military school has already begun its influence. Am I silly to read between the lines? It's just that I know how proud and stubborn he is. "I'm sorry" would choke in his throat. Still—his faults are so few that I harbor yet that old feeling that he will be a great man.

The door flew open.

"Hey, Jan, it's time for sup—oh, no! Don't tell me you're pining away over Sir Lancelot's framed likeness again? Which reminds me—" She reached in her jacket pocket, "here's your mail. You're welcome. I won't be able to sleep tonight, though. Humph! There will be stars shining in your eyes brighter than the moon shining in the window. Yes, it's from Uncle Sam's Pretty Boys School." She saluted stiffly.

Joe started sauntering casually across the room but I lunged for the letter which she was holding high over her head like a master who makes his dog speak for his supper.

Shakily, I tore open the envelope, drew forth the paper with the school's seal and saw the familiar handwriting. Slowly I read:

Dear Jan,

The annual Christmas Hop is scheduled for the 20th, three weeks from today.

We mentioned it last summer. Remember? Will you be my date? Please reply immediately.

Hope you can arrange to come. There is something I must discuss with you.

Always,

Jon

Jo had been reading over my shoulder and shaking her head, she drawled, "Well, if it had begun 'Dear Madame' and ended 'Yours Truly,' it would have been a model business letter. Oh, oh, don't look now but those stars are coming through already.

Lowering myself carefully into our only chair, I smiled up at her freckled face which at that moment looked beautiful to me. I felt as weak as the college cafeteria's coffee. A crushing weight had been lifted from me and I loved the whole world—including my biology professor.

"In a way, Jo, it is a business letter," I breathed. "Unfinished business for Jon and me."

Renaissance

*Our memory is a dream of the roses
we tried to throw away and forget.*

*It is not so much how we threw them
but where they fell, for*

*Each was a thorn to be buried in one
place like a wound in the ground.*

*But it was the earth, opening in a
door to Spring, that cannot die and
cannot be entirely born again.*

—HARRIET HOPE

Laboratory Routine

The insistent ringing of the laboratory telephone woke Joyce from her deep sleep. She hurriedly put on her uniform and ran out into the lab to answer it. The crisp efficient voice at the other end was saying, "This is the operating room. We need five pints of blood for an emergency. The patient is Miss Jane Carter, hospital number B-8956. You have her specimens."

Joyce slowly dropped the receiver back into the cradle, and glanced at her watch. It was 3:00 a.m. As she walked back toward the Blood Bank, she tried to shake off the sleepiness and fatigue which she felt after twenty-four hours of duty. She found the specimens of Miss Carter's blood, and with methodical swiftness she began crossmatching the blood which could save the life of this unknown woman. Her hands knew their task and she marveled at the speed with which they worked—seemingly without her control.

Her mind went back to the time when she had first entered the laboratory to begin her training. Everyone around her had worked so quickly and easily with equipment which was strange to her. She had enviously watched the older students who were always so calm and efficient, even in time of emergency. She was a stranger even though she wore a white uniform.

Her first month of training had been a very trying time. She had learned the name and use of some of the equipment and had gotten to know some of her fellow students, but nothing had prepared her for going out onto the wards. There she had seen mothers with new babies, sick children, the wealthy who demanded their health, and the poor who plead for their health. She had seen happiness over the recovery of a loved one and grief over their death. Also she had seen people deserted by family and friends, and left in the hospital to die. As she viewed the people who daily passed through the doors of the hospital, she had felt shock, pity, happiness, and disgust.

Joyce finished the crossmatching and put the blood suspensions on slides. She looked at them under the microscope to see if the blood from the Bank was compatible with that of Miss Carter. The blood matched and she felt a sense of accomplishment, for in her hands she held the substance which could save the life of another human being. She was a vital part of the vast machinery of the hospital.

Joyce started to the telephone to call the operating room to tell that the blood was ready, and as she did, she saw that the time was 3:10 a.m. Congratulating herself on the speed with which she had worked, she picked up the phone and dialed the number.

"This is the laboratory. I have the blood ready for Miss Jane Carter."

The clipped voice answered her, "We won't be needing it now, the patient just died."

MYRTICE RUMBLE

